30th July 2025

Everything

"No, pray thee, let it serve for table-talk;
Then, howsoe'er thou speak'st, 'mong other things
I shall digest it."

William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*

In *The Merchant of Venice,* Lorenzo makes the statement above when he and Jessica are about to go to dinner. Whatever is going on between them, it indicates an important truth about their meal together – nothing in their table-talk would be off-limits. Time together was a time to talk.

Yesterday, I quoted part of a speech by the Walrus in Lewis Carroll's *The Walrus and the Carpenter.* The full context is this:

'The time has come' the Walrus said,
'To talk of many things:
Of shoes – and ships – and sealing-wax –
Of cabbages – and kings –
And why the sea is boiling hot –
And whether pigs have wings.'

Nothing was off-limits for the Walrus either. What mattered was talking – about anything, about *everything.* The Walrus might well have echoed Lorenzo in saying, "I shall digest it." Because it's not *what* we talk about that matters, it's that we're prepared to talk at all.

Many of my conversations with patients in the hospice weren't conducted in the expected "counselling" arrangement – close proximity, eye-contact, privacy – but like two people on a park bench, side-by-side, "chewing the fat", sharing, exploring together. And in the "talk of many things" there were frequently moments of profound importance, when something crucial was articulated – often for the very first time. These important moments might never have come up in a "forced" or "contrived" conversation, but could only happen because we were talking together.

So, let's talk. Let's keep talking – about cabbages and kings, and whether pigs can fly. It all matters. Nothing is wasted. Let's not artificially decide what's off limits. Let's take time to deepen our relationships. For you never know, in the midst of our wide-ranging talk about everything, it's just possible that the *something* that matters might emerge

A prayer for today

Everything? Yes, Lord, especially when you say: Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Everything? Yes, everything!

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